World Scripture - LOVE YOUR ENEMY

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LOVE YOUR ENEMY

The prescription to love your enemy and to requite evil with good is sometimes thought of as an impractical and perfectionist ethic, able to be practiced only by a few exceptional souls. But, in fact, this doctrine is widely taught in all religions as a fundamental principle for pursuing relationships with others. The person who insists upon vengeance or retribution is not necessarily committing a crime, but neither will his act of revenge be helpful to spiritual advancement. Revenge, which requites evil with evil, only multiplies evil in the world, while love, by in which one strives to overcome evil with good, spreads goodness in the world.

True love is unconditional and impartial--thus the metaphor of the sun that shines down on all life. It is tested and proven by encounters with those who are difficult to love. Where true love prevails, there no enemies are found.

The concluding passages dispute the prescription to love your enemy when it apparently contravenes the principles of justice and right. Sometimes the best way to love an evil person is to make him face justice, or to hinder him from doing wrong. Nevertheless, these corrective actions should be done with a loving heart and with the other person's welfare uppermost in mind.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me!" In those who harbor such thoughts hatred is not appeased.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me!" In those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred is appeased.

Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law.

Buddhism. Dhammapada 3-5

Dhammapada 3-5: Cf. Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9.4, p. 850.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
Christianity. Matthew 5.43-48

My Lord! Others have fallen back in showing compassion to their benefactors as you have shown compassion even to your malefactors. All this is unparalleled.

Jainism. Vitaragastava 14.5

Of the adage, Only a good man knows how to like people, knows how to dislike them, Confucius said, "He whose heart is in the smallest degree set upon Goodness will dislike no one."

Confucianism. Analects 4.3-4

I should be like the sun, shining universally on all without seeking thanks or reward, able to take care of all sentient beings even if they are bad, never giving up on my vows on this account, not abandoning all sentient beings because one sentient being is evil.

Buddhism. Garland Sutra 23

What kind of love is this that to another can shift? Says Nanak, True lovers are those who are forever absorbed in the Beloved. Whoever discriminates between treatment held good or bad, Is not a true lover--he rather is caught in calculations.

Sikhism. Adi Granth, Asa-ki-Var, M.2, p. 474

The sage has no fixed [personal] ideas.
He regards the people's ideas as his own.
I treat those who are good with goodness,

And I also treat those who are not good with goodness.
Thus goodness is attained.

I am honest with those who are honest,
And I am also honest with those who are dishonest.
Thus honesty is attained.

Taoism. Tao Te Ching 49

Matthew 5.43-48: Cf. 1 John 4.18-20, p. 209; also Genesis 32:3-20, pp. 556-57, on Jacob's love for Esau. Cf. Sun Myung Moon, 10-20-73, pp. 850f. Asa-ki-Var, M.2: Cf. Wadhans, M.1, p. 210; Slok, Farid, p. 365. Garland Sutra 23: Cf. Mahaparinirvana Sutra 15.20, pp. 211f.; Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines 321-22, p. 829; Garland Sutra 23, p. 837; Sikshasamuccaya 280-81, p. 837; Digha Nikaya xiii.77, p. 211; Metta Sutta, p. 209.

It may be that God will ordain love between you and those whom you hold as enemies. For God has power over all things; and God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.
Islam. Qur'an 60.7

Aid an enemy before you aid a friend, to subdue hatred.

Judaism. Tosefta, Baba Metzia 2.26

Do good to him who has done you an injury.

Taoism. Tao Te Ching 63

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Christianity. Romans 12.21

God said, "Resemble Me; just as I repay good for evil so do you also repay good for evil."

Judaism. Exodus Rabbah 26.2

Conquer anger by love. Conquer evil by good. Conquer the stingy by giving. Conquer the liar by truth.

Buddhism. Dhammapada 223

Man should subvert anger by forgiveness, subdue pride by modesty, overcome hypocrisy with simplicity, and greed by contentment.

Jainism. Samanasuttam 136

May generosity triumph over niggardliness,
May love triumph over contempt,
May the true-spoken word triumph over the false-spoken word,
May truth triumph over falsehood.

Zoroastrianism. Yasna 60.5

The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo!, he between whom and you there was enmity shall become as though he were a bosom friend.

But none is granted it save those who are steadfast, and none is granted it save a person of great good fortune.

Islam. Qur'an 41.34-35

Dhammapada 223: Cf. James 1.20, p. 793; Genesis 32.3-20, pp. 556f.

A superior being does not render evil for evil; this is a maxim one should observe; the ornament of virtuous persons is their conduct. One should never harm the wicked or the good or even criminals meriting death. A noble soul will ever exercise compassion even towards those who enjoy injuring others or those of cruel deeds when they are actually committing them--for who is without fault?
Hinduism. Ramayana, Yuddha Kanda 115

The reason why God does not punish even though He may see an enemy and have the urge to kill him and get revenge, is that He is thinking of the enemy's parents, wife and children who all love. Knowing all too well their unparalleled love toward that person, God cannot strike him with His iron rod. When you really understand such a heart of God, could you take revenge on your enemy? When you know all these things, you would even go and help that person. In this manner one comes closer to the Great Way of heavenly Principle, that Great Way which tries to embrace everything centering on love. When this happens earth will shake and

induce even God to shed tears. "You truly resemble me. How happy I am!" He will ex- claim. God always looks at things in that perspective. This is how we should understand the teaching to love one's enemy. The source of such a power to love your enemy is neither knowledge, nor money, nor earthly power. It is only true love.

Unification Church. Sun Myung Moon, 3-30-90

Someone said, "What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?" The Master said, "With what will you then recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness."

Confucianism. Analects 14.36

According to Anas ibn Malik, the Prophet said, "Help your brother whether he is oppressor or oppressed."

According to Anas, after the Messenger of God said, "Help your brother whether he is oppressor or oppressed," Anas replied to him, "O Messenger of God, a man who is oppressed I am ready to help, but how does one help an oppressor?" "By hindering him doing wrong," he said.

Islam. Hadith of Bukhari

Ramayana: Cf. Yajur Veda 36.18, p. 210. Sun Myung Moon, 3-30-90: See Sun Myung Moon, 10-20-73, pp. 850f. Analects 14.36: This and the following passage dispute the notion that to love your enemy always means to do kindness, if that would not uphold justice. Confucius is here disputing the proverb from the Tao Te Ching 63, quoted above. Yet Confucius also praises the ideal of universal benevolence in Analects 4.3-4, above. Apparently, even though a man may like an evildoer and want to help him, sometimes doing him a kindness will not be helpful; particularly if that 'kindness' only encourages him to do more evil. Tougher measures may be appropriate, but these, too, should be motivated by genuine love--by a parental concern for the wrongdoer's welfare. See also Yogachara Bhumi Shastra, p. 416; Sanhedrin 72a, p. 415. Hadith of Bukhari: See the previous note.

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